DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 340 802 UD 028 472

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TITLE Attitudes of Parents and Teachers toward Improving Academic Achievement in Inner-City Schools.
PUB DATE Nov 91
NOTE 29p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (20th, Lexington, KY, November 13-16, 1991).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Achievement Gains; Attitude Change; Attitude Measures; Educational Improvement; Elementary Education; Elementary School Teachers; English Instruction; *Inner City; Mathematics Instruction; *Parent Attitudes; Parent Participation; *Teacher Attitudes; *Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS *Memphis City Schools TN

ABSTRACT

This monograph studies the relationship between parental attitudes and student achievement in inner-city schools, and compares parental and teacher attitudes regarding parental involvement in elementary education. Seventy-one teachers from two inner-city elementary schools in Memphis (Tennessee) and 30 parents of students from one school responded to a parent-teacher attitudinal questionnaire. Parental attitude changes as a result of a treatment designed to increase parent participation in the schools are measured for a subgroup of 13 parents before and after their children were taught English and mathematics. Both teachers and parents believe that teachers want parental involvement in education. Teachers rated parents' educational expectations and parents' ability to communicate these expectations to their children significantly lower than parents did, suggesting that teachers feel parents do not provide enough encouragement. There is a relatively low correlation between student gains in English and mathematics and parental attitude changes, indicating that the relationship between these factors is not significant. The study suggests that teachers and parents might benefit from training to enhance understanding and parental involvement. Statistical data are provided in four tables. Seven references are listed. An appendix contains the questionnaire answered by teachers and parents. (SLD)

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ATTITUDES OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS TOWARD IMPROVING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN INNER-CITY SCHOOLS

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Presented at the Twentieth Annual Meeting
Mid-South Educational Research Association
Lexington, Kentucky

November 15, 1991

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INTRODUCTION

Many teachers begin their careers in the inner-city schools with a high energy level, desirous of making their subject matter exciting to their students and demonstrating that they genuinely care for them. However, professional disappointment, accompanied by fear and anxiety, is sometimes replacing the joy of teaching the inner-city child because of the difficulties of improving academic performance (Twillie, 1988). Many school systems are requiring and demanding that each child reach a level of 80% mastery in reading, math, and one other academic subject before passing to another grade.

Literature indicates that teachers feel that only with the help of parents can a teacher's job be performed adequately. Several issues of educational journals have been devoted to and addressed the need for parental, student and teacher involvement to improve academic achievement. The extensive research of Epstein and Becker (1981, 1982) concludes that there is a great need for such involvement. Research from the Phi Delta Kappan (Mueller, 1987) confirms that students learn more when their parents are involved in their education: the greater the involvement of parents, the larger the students' academic gains. Furthermore, teachers achieve better results when they understand the children they teach, as well as their home environments and the expectations their parents hold for them.

Does a positive relationship among parents, teachers and students help to improve the academic achievement of the inner-city child as measured by the parent-teacher attitudinal questionnaire? The researchers made the following assumptions: (1) the responses of teachers in two different inner-city schools accurately reflect their attitudes concerning parental involvement as measured by the attitudinal questionnaire, and (2) responses of parents accurately reflect positive attitudes concerning parental, student and teacher involvement when

there is a strong correlation with improved academic achievement by their children in various subject areas.

The research questions posed were the following:

(1) Is there a relationship between parental attitudes and student achievement?

(2) Is there a difference between parental attitudes and teacher attitudes regarding parental involvement in elementary education?

For the purposes of this study, an inner-city school is defined as a school located in an inner city area designated by the city. It is where the inner-city child attends not only for education but for the nurturing and care he may not receive at home. An inner-city school must have strong disciplinarians to deal with some of the problems of the city child, as well as have patience and understanding (Classroom Teachers, 1991).

An inner-city child is defined as a child with the same needs and desires as other children. He might be or is usually the victim of low economic standards, might be the product of any one or all of the following: single-parent home, over-crowded home, lack of education or illiteracy in the home, latch-key, unsanitary living conditions, drugs and alcohols, and teen-age pregnancy. All can have a negative effect on a child that might cause low academic achievement (Classroom Teachers, 1991).

To answer the research questions, a group of teachers from two inner-city schools and one group of parents from one inner-city school setting responded to the parent-teacher attitudinal questionnaire. Their responses were analyzed, and parents' attitude changes were also compared to students' academic gains/losses.

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

Parents can no longer be excluded from playing a part in the educational programs of their children. The primary responsibility for educating children lies with the family. Today's parents are better educated than ever. To a large extent, this fact reflects well on the education they received in the public schools and on the competent public school teachers and administrators of our nation (Mueller, 1987).

Several teachers have offered positive statements that indicate that the job of teaching cannot be accomplished without programs that involve parents. One teacher says she relies on parent help, but she realized long ago that only with parental help could her job be performed adequately (Epstein and Becker, 1982). Other teachers believe that both parents and students can benefit from parental involvement.

There is much positive research supporting parental, student, and teacher involvement to help improve academic achievement, but there are many debates on what and how the parent should be involved. Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers consistently rank parental involvement high among the components of effective schools. Two decades of research on family environments show that children have an advantage in school when their parents continuously support and encourage their school activities.

Not all families, however, know how to become involved in school-related activities, and not all schools actively encourage and direct parental involvement. There is very little agreement on the most useful types of parental involvement that will help to improve academic achievement.

This research will highlight five basic ways parents may be involved. Comprehensive programs should include all of them (Epstein, 1987).

Basic Obligations of Parents

The most basic involvement of parents is providing for their children's food, clothing, shelter, health, safety, and general well-being. In their child-rearing activities, parents teach their infants and toddlers basic cognitive and social skills, more or less preparing their children for school and continuing to guide, advise, and teach them through childhood and adolescence. Most parents meet their children's basic needs independently, but, when these obligations are not met, administrators and teachers may be obliged to assist the family or to alert community social service agencies about the family's need for help.

Because parents vary in their experience and skills, some schools take active roles in helping parents understand and build positive home conditions for their children's school learning and behavior.

Basic Obligations of Schools

A second type of parental involvement common to all schools is communication from the school to the home. The school has an obligation to inform parents about school programs and their children's progress, and parents are expected to act on the information they receive. All schools send home memos, report cards, calendars of the school year, and notices of special events. Some districts also offer taped messages on various topics that parents can access by phone to boost their awareness and understanding of school programs and policies.

Parents of all grade levels need clear information about the objectives and specific skills for each subject each year, course requirements and consequences of course selections, standards for promotion and graduation, grading practices and test results, school budget allocations and policy decisions, and other important district, school, and classroom matters.

An ideal school's communication can be designed so that useful messages, ideas, and questions go from school to home and from home to school. Cooperation is essential for this flow of information.

Parental Involvement at School

A third familiar type of parental involvement brings parents to the school building, usually in connection with several of these activities. Parent volunteers may assist teachers and students in the classroom, on class trips, or at class parties; teach mini-courses; participate in career awareness programs; demonstrate hobbies and talents; provide after-school remediation or enrichment programs, homework clinics, or hot line; and help administrators and teachers in the cafeteria, library, computer lab, or other areas that require adult supervision.

In most schools, these activities are conducted by relatively few parents who are available during the day. According to the survey (Epstein, 1987), over 70% of the parents studied had never been involved in any such activities, mainly because 60% of the mothers worked full- or part-time. Only about 4% - one or two parents per classroom - were highly active as school volunteers for 25 days or more per year.

She stated that (1987) the benefits of parental involvement are many and go beyond valuable assistance in classroom management, instruction, and nonteaching duties. Having parents active at school encourages teachers to request other parents to conduct learning activities with their children at home. The research also indicates that, while most parents believe involvement at school is important, relatively few participate.

Parental Involvement in Learning Activities at Home

The fourth major type of parental involvement is assistance with learning activities at home, which may occur with or without specific advice and directions from teachers. The learning activities may be designed to build either general skills and behaviors or specific learning skills that are directly coordinated with the children's classwork.

Parents may be asked to assist the child to build skills that are useful in school but that do not duplicate the teacher's efforts. For example, the teacher may request parents' assistance to help students learn how to manage study habits and school routines and to develop problem-solving and critical thinking. The parent also may be asked to reinforce learning and discipline on a reward or punishment schedule set up in cooperation with the teacher.

Specific Skills

Parents may be asked to assist their children to review, complete, or extend skills that the student is working on with the teacher in class. This may include the specific sequences of skills needed at each grade level in mathematics, reading, language arts, social studies, science, art, music, or other subjects. Teachers who frequently use home learning activities are usually able to involve parents of all educational backgrounds, even though other teachers claim that parents with less than a high school education lack the ability or willingness to help their children with learning activities.

Epstein's research identifies 16 techniques that can be used by teachers to involve parents in learning activities at home with their children in reading, playing, learning games, and tutoring (they can also observe teachers in order to learn how to teach at home). They are the following:

1. Ask parents to read to their children regularly or to listen to the children read aloud.
2. Loan books, workbooks, and other materials to parents.
3. Ask parents to take their children to the library.
4. Ask parents to get their children to talk about what they did that day in class.
5. Give an assignment that requires the children to ask their parents questions.
6. Ask parents to watch a specific television program with their children and to discuss the show afterward.
7. Suggest ways for parents to include their children in any of their own educationally enriching activities.
8. Send home suggestions for games or group activities related to the children's schoolwork that can be played by either parent and child or by child and siblings.
9. Suggest how parents might use home materials and activities to stimulate their children's interest in reading, math, and other subjects.
10. Establish a formal agreement whereby parents supervise and assist children in completing homework tasks.
11. Establish a formal agreement whereby parents provide rewards and/or penalties based on the children's school performance or behavior.
12. Ask parents to come to observe the classroom (not to "help") for part of a day.
13. Explain to parents certain techniques for teaching, for making learning materials, or for planning lessons.
14. Give a questionnaire to parents so that they can evaluate their children's progress or provide some other form of feedback.

15. Ask parents to sign homework to ensure its completion.
16. Ask parents to provide spelling practice, math drills, and practice activities, or to help with workbook assignments (Epstein, 1987).

METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

In order to answer the research questions, a group (N = 71) of teachers from two elementary schools was asked to respond to the 26-item questionnaire, as was a group of 30 parents from one of the same educational environments. Item analyses were employed to determine to which items of the questionnaire each group responded more favorably or less favorably. The teacher group was then compared to the parent group using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). A smaller sample of the group of parents (N = 13) was compared with regard to items on the pre- and post-questionnaires and correlated with academic improvement of children from pre- and posttests in English and mathematics.

This study employs a quasi-experimental design in which a combined group of parents and a combined group of students were compared on two variables. The group of parents was administered the attitudinal questionnaire for pre- and posttest, and the group of students was administered the academic pre- and posttest, in English and mathematics. Each variable was administered twice to the respondents. The posttest was administered to each group after the treatments were applied. It is assumed that the attitudinal questionnaire represented the true attitudes of the parents and that the pre- and posttests in English and mathematics represented the true academic gains in achievement of the students.

SELECTION OF POPULATION

The group of teachers was obtained by using the entire faculty from two elementary schools; one had 48 teachers; the other had 23 teachers. Both schools serve an inner-city populace. The two groups of teachers were not compared on a single variable, but an item analysis was done on each item of the attitudinal questionnaire.

The group of parents was obtained from one elementary school setting. This group was composed of 30 parents, 13 of whom responded to the post-questionnaire and had children who were taught English and mathematics in the treatment classroom.

TREATMENT

Parents were given a variety of materials as part of the overall treatment. All students were given a school handbook that they were instructed to show the parents. The handbook included a calender of events and activities during the school term, a statement of the purpose and philosophy of the school, and goals and objectives for the student. Each parent was supplied with a syllabus. The syllabus outlined course requirements, readings, and mastery levels for English and mathematics. A list of supplies the student needed for the term was also sent to parents.

A copy of disciplinary rules and school regulations was sent to each parent. This form was signed by parents and sent back to the school. A consent form was also sent to parents. This, too, had to be signed and returned in order for parents to participate in the study.

Two-way discussions took place between teachers and parents during conferences, open houses, and over the telephone. They outlined good study

habits at home, student attitudes about school, and how to use the school handbook and syllabus during the school term.

Written deficiency or progress notices were sent home periodically during the school term. Such notices informed the parents of work that fell below or surpassed 80% mastery levels.

THE INSTRUMENT

The Questionnaire on Improving Academic Achievement of Inner-City Students was developed by researchers from Memphis City Schools and the Bureau of Educational Research Service, College of Education, Memphis State University as part of a larger study of parental attitudes toward classroom teachers. A copy of the instrument is in Appendix A. It has 26 items that are scored on a Likert-type scale. Items for the instrument were gleaned from literature that described attitudes of parents, students and teachers in inner-city schools toward the classroom teacher in regard to improving academic achievement. The validity of the instrument is considered as "face validity" because judgments of inner-city parents, principals, instructional supervisors, teachers, as well as literature sources, were used in the developmental process. Reliability of the questionnaire was statistically determined.

Categorization of response along a four-part continuum of "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree" forces the respondent to choose one category. The instrument has no room for indecision as is sometimes the case with other Likert-type scales. The responses are valued at 4, 3, 2, and 1 with "strongly agree" being 4 and "strongly disagree" being 1. The range of scores, theoretically, is 4-1; however, the extremes are viewed as "pure types" that are unlikely to occur.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE INSTRUMENT

Permission to administer the instrument was obtained from the principals of the two inner-city schools involved in the study. It was administered by two of the investigators to teachers during faculty meetings and staff development workshops. It was administered to parents during special conferences and an open house.

Both investigators stressed that anonymity and secrecy of response would be maintained. Teachers were not to sign their names nor put any identifying mark on the questionnaires. Questionnaires for parents were coded because the items on the questionnaire would be correlated with academic gains of the children. Teachers and parents were informed that the questionnaire has no right or wrong answers but measures the reflections of the respondent at the time of administration. The instrument is so marked that each item is the best representation of the feelings of those responding.

RESULTS

An analysis of the data yielded demographic descriptions concerning individuals involved and statistical measures to establish differences and similarities.

Demographics

Demographic characteristics were collected on teachers, parents, and students. The teachers were the entire complement of faculty at two inner-city elementary schools in Memphis, ranging from music teachers to librarians. Only a few of the teachers who completed questionnaires and provided demographic data instructed the students involved in the study. Only those

parents who had students involved in the study were asked to complete questionnaires.

Teacher Characteristics

Of the seventy-one teachers responding to the questionnaires, the vast majority were female (see Table 1). More than one-half were African-American, and the rest were Caucasian. The mean number of years of total teaching experience was 12.9 (range, 1 to 33 years), while inner-city years of experience averaged 9.8 (range, 1 to 31 years). Years teaching in inner-city settings reflected 75.7% of the total years of experience for teachers. Most of the teachers surveyed received training at a public college or university. Nearly two-thirds of the teachers were trained in elementary education, with training in secondary and

TABLE 1. Teacher Characteristics

GENDER:	Female	95.8%
(N = 71)	Male	4.2%
ETHNICITY:	African-American	57.7%
(N = 71)	Caucasian	42.3%
EXPERIENCE:	Total (mean)	12.9 years
(N = 69)	Inner-city (mean)	9.8 years (75.7% of total)
COLLEGE:	Public	65.0%
(N = 64)	Private	35.0%
TRAINING:	Elementary	66.2%
(N = 51)	Secondary	17.6%
	Pre-school	16.2%
HIGHEST DEGREE EARNED:	Master's	64.3%
(N = 70)	Bachelor's	31.4%
	Specialist	4.3%

pre-school education representing 17.6% and 16.2%, respectively The majority of teachers had a master's degree, almost one-third had only a bachelor's degree, and a small number had a specialist degree as their highest-earned credential.

Parent Characteristics

Twenty-nine of the thirty parents who responded to the questionnaire completed the demographic items. Over 86% of the respondents were female (see Table 2). Most of these were mothers of the students, but grandmothers and aunts also were represented. Fathers comprised almost 14% of the parents. The number of children the parents had in school averaged 2.5 (range, 1 to 13). Students in the fourth grade averaged 1.1 (range, 1 to 5). Students in the fourth grade accounted for over 30% of the total number of children that parents had in school.

TABLE 2. Parent Characteristics

GENDER: (N = 29)	Female	86.2%
	Male	13.8%
RELATION TO STUDENT: (N = 29)	Mother	75.9%
	Father	13.8%
	Grandmother	6.9%
	Aunt	3.5%
CHILDREN: (N = 29)	Total in school(mean)	2.5
	In 4th Grade (mean)	1.1 (31.7% of total)

Student Characteristics

All of the students who participated in this study were in the fourth grade at an inner-city elementary school in Memphis, Tennessee. Females represented 69.2% of the students, and males represented 30.8%.

Statistical Measures

Item analyses to determine significance, ANOVA, gain scores, and a correlation coefficient were calculated to establish the effectiveness of the intervention strategies.

Analysis of Questionnaires

Results of the item analyses indicated that 17 items produced significant differences. Teachers agreed significantly with items 1, 5, 8, 11, 21, 23, 25, and 26 (see Table 3); they disagreed significantly with items 15, 18, 19, 20, 22, and 24. Parents agreed significantly with items 5, 7, 15, and 21; they disagreed significantly with items 3, 17, and 24.

The results of the one-way ANOVAs (see Table 4) revealed that teachers and parents differed significantly on 16 items (1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24), though this does not necessarily mean that they disagreed. For example, Item 21 showed a significant difference in responses, with parents rating this item higher than teachers. However, teachers also rated this item significantly high. In fact, both groups produced identical probabilities on this particular item analysis ($p = .000$ for both).

Educational Measures

Students' academic achievement was measured in English and mathematics. Thirteen students took pretests and posttests in these two subjects. All students improved dramatically, with a mean gain in English of 52.7 points and a mean gain in mathematics of 37.5 points.

Parent Questionnaires and Educational Measures

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients were calculated in order to determine the relationship between students' academic gains/losses and

TABLE 3. Teacher and Parents Questionnaire Results (t-tests)

	GROUP	N	MEAN	MU	STDEV	T	p
ITEM 1:	Teachers	71	3.07	2.88	.6397	2.57	.012*
	Parents	30	3.40	3.30	.6210	.85	.400
ITEM 3:	Teachers	71	2.89	2.88	.4644	.22	.820
	Parents	30	2.97	3.30	.5560	-3.31	.003**
ITEM 5:	Teachers	71	3.44	2.88	.7509	6.30	.000**
	Parents	30	3.63	3.30	.5560	3.25	.003**
ITEM 7:	Teachers	71	2.99	2.88	.5730	1.63	.110
	Parents	30	3.53	3.30	.5070	2.49	.019*
ITEM 8:	Teachers	71	3.28	2.88	.7208	4.75	.000**
	Parents	30	3.47	3.30	.6290	1.43	.160
ITEM 11:	Teachers	71	3.13	2.88	.6746	3.14	.002**
	Parents	30	3.30	3.30	.5350	-.03	.980
ITEM 15:	Teachers	71	2.51	2.88	.5824	-5.32	.000**
	Parents	30	3.57	3.30	.6790	2.13	.042*
ITEM 17:	Teachers	71	2.83	2.88	.4468	-.83	.410
	Parents	30	2.90	3.30	.7120	-3.10	.004**
ITEM 18:	Teachers	71	2.52	2.88	.6293	-4.74	.000**
	Parents	30	3.33	3.30	.7580	.22	.830
ITEM 19:	Teachers	71	2.28	2.88	.7780	-6.43	.000**
	Parents	30	3.23	3.30	.6790	-.56	.580
ITEM 20:	Teachers	71	2.27	2.88	.6752	-7.58	.000**
	Parents	30	3.17	3.30	.6480	-1.15	.260
ITEM 21:	Teachers	71	3.15	2.88	.5769	4.09	.000**
	Parents	30	3.73	3.30	.5210	4.53	.000**
ITEM 22:	Teachers	71	2.69	2.88	.6674	-2.33	.022*
	Parents	30	3.10	3.30	.7120	-1.56	.130
ITEM 23:	Teachers	71	3.10	2.88	.5645	3.34	.001**
	Parents	30	3.43	3.30	.5040	1.42	.170
ITEM 24:	Teachers	71	2.24	2.88	.8188	-6.54	.000**
	Parents	30	3.03	3.30	.7180	-2.06	.049*
ITEM 25:	Teachers	71	3.13	2.88	.5588	3.80	.000**
	Parents	30	3.30	3.30	.5960	-.03	.980
ITEM 26:	Teachers	71	3.31	2.88	.6457	5.67	.000**
	Parents	30	3.47	3.30	.5070	1.77	.088

*Significant at .05 **Significant at .01

TABLE 4. Teacher and Parents Questionnaire Results (ANOVA)

	MEAN FOR TEACHERS	MEAN FOR PARENTS	DF (TOTAL)	F	P
ITEM 1:	3.07	3.40	100	5.69	.019*
ITEM 2:	3.00	3.27	100	4.38	.039*
ITEM 4:	2.83	3.43	100	17.48	.000**
ITEM 6:	2.79	3.20	100	9.14	.003**
ITEM 7:	2.99	3.53	100	20.55	.000**
ITEM 9:	2.79	3.43	100	23.32	.000**
ITEM 10:	2.78	3.07	100	5.88	.017*
ITEM 15:	2.51	3.57	100	63.16	.000**
ITEM 16:	2.82	3.30	100	13.20	.000**
ITEM 18:	2.52	3.33	100	31.03	.000**
ITEM 19:	2.28	3.23	100	33.93	.000**
ITEM 20:	2.27	3.17	100	38.28	.000**
ITEM 21:	3.15	3.73	100	22.41	.000**
ITEM 22:	2.69	3.10	100	7.64	.007**
ITEM 23:	3.10	3.43	100	7.88	.006**
ITEM 24:	2.24	3.03	100	21.26	.000**

*Significant at .05 **Significant at .01

parents' attitudinal gains/losses. The correlation of students' changes in English scores and parents' attitudinal changes was .287 (df = 11), which accounts for 8.2% of variance. The correlation of students' changes in mathematics scores and parents' attitudinal changes was .323 (df = 11), which accounts for 10.4% of variance. These correlations are positive, though not significant.

DISCUSSION

This study surveyed teachers' and parents' attitudes about elementary education. Item analyses revealed which issues teachers and parents felt strongly about. This study also investigated the relationship between parental attitudes and student achievement and the differences between teacher attitudes and parental attitudes regarding elementary education. Parents' attitude changes were correlated with student academic gains/losses, and teachers' attitudes were compared with parents' attitudes.

Implications

Results of the statistical analyses yielded significance on t-tests and ANOVA. Correlations between student gains and parents' attitude changes were low.

Item Analyses

Results of the item analyses produced significant results on 17 items (see Table 3 and Appendix A). Teachers agreed significantly with eight items and disagreed significantly with five items. Parents agreed significantly with four items and disagreed significantly with three items.

1. Teachers felt that most students regard teachers' high expectations of them positively (Item 1). This may suggest that teachers are hopeful that their high standards are well received by students.
2. Parents felt that most students do not get along well with other students (Item 3). This may suggest a pessimistic view of students' peer relationships.
3. Both teachers and parents believed that teachers want parental involvement in education (Item 5). This is an encouraging sign since all

respondents agreed that teachers and parents play an important role in education.

4. Item 7 revealed that parents felt good about teachers' high expectations of their children. Teachers, however, were not so sure that parents accepted their high expectations.

5. Item 8 showed that teachers expect all children to achieve all school system goals. Parents appeared less optimistic about teachers' expectations.

6. Item 11 highlighted, again, teachers' commitment to mastery levels. Parents, as in Item 8, were not so sure that teachers actually expected students to achieve such mastery.

7. Teachers did not believe that parents are able to communicate what is expected of students (Item 15). Parents, on the other hand, were quite certain that they know how to tell their children what is expected of them in school.

8. Parents did not feel that students respond well to teachers' evaluations of their academic performance (Item 17). Teachers' responses to this item were not significant.

9. Teachers did not feel that parents have positive relationship with their children (Item 18). This may be a critical issue in developing parent-teacher cooperation.

10. Teachers felt that parents and students do not want home visits as a part of the educational orientation (Item 19). Whether teachers actually believe this, or whether they simply are not interested in visiting homes, remains unclear.

11. Teachers did not feel that students behave in a manner that demonstrates love and high expectations from parents (Item 20). Parents' responses to this item were also negative, though not significant. Such attitudes do not appear to reflect favorably on the current behavior of students and their home

environments. They do, however, shed light on a potential problem facing inner-city youth.

12. Teachers and parents all agreed that parents care for and love their children (Item 21). This is encouraging and may temper the negative suggestions of Item 20.

13. Teachers did not believe that parents felt that teachers communicate clearly to them (Item 22). Parents responded much the same, though not significantly.

14. Again, Item 23 underscores teachers' high expectations of students. As with Items 8 and 11, parents did not respond significantly about teachers' standards for their children.

15. Much like Item 19, Item 24 showed that neither teachers nor parents felt that home visits were especially desirable. There appears to be some hesitation either to allow home visits on the part of parents or to go to students' homes on the part of teachers.

16. Teachers overwhelmingly believed that students feel that teachers care for them (Item 25). Parents showed little responsiveness to this item.

17. Item 26, as well as Items 8, 11, and 23, revealed that teachers feel they expect much from students. Parents responded favorably to Item 26; yet, no significance was observed.

Analysis of Variance

The analysis of variance that produced significant differences of particular interest involved items related to parents' expectations about education and students' relationships with parents (see Table 4 and Appendix A). The following statements relate to the analysis:

1. Items 4, 9, and 15 dealt with parents' educational expectations. Teachers differed significantly from parents, rating parents' expectations about

educational standards and their abilities to communicate these expectations to their children lower than parents. This may suggest that teachers feel that parents do not provide enough encouragement to students regarding educational performance.

2. Teachers did not feel that parents have a positive relationship with students (Item 18). This may relate to lack of encouragement at home but may be a broader concern about parent-student relationships.

3. A more interesting analysis involved Item 24, which discussed home visits. On the t-test, both teachers and parents significantly disagreed that parents want home visits. The ANOVA showed that teachers rated this item significantly lower than parents. This suggests that parents are less inclined to deny such home visits and that teachers either feel unwelcome or do not wish to visit homes in the first place.

Correlations with Educational Measures

The relatively low correlations between students' English and mathematics grade gains and parents' attitude changes suggests that the relationship between these two factors is not significant. The obtained correlations are positive, so there does appear to be some evidence to suggest that they are related. It may, however, be the case that only when students excel do parents' attitudes improve. While the positive relationship is encouraging and reasonable to expect, further research is needed to clarify just how important parental attitudes are in improving student achievement.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Interpreting significant items proved cumbersome because the grand mean of teachers' responses was dramatically lower than parents' responses. It

appears that teachers were more thoughtful than parents in their appraisal of the educational dynamics covered by the questionnaire. Parents averaged 3.3 out of a possible 4.0 on all items. Parents may have responded favorably to most items either out of fear of retaliation or out of disinterest, or perhaps they lacked the time to adequately read and understand each item. Whatever the case, parents' responses were substantially skewed.

The questionnaire has only face validity. No reliability or construct validity data exist for this particular instrument. The item analyses revealed several items that may be excluded from future use.

The study used small numbers of participants, employed a quasi-experimental design, and focused only on fourth-grade students and parents. A true experimental design, more participants, and an extension to other grade levels would greatly remedy these limitations and provide greater generalizability of obtained results.

Recommendations

The results of this study suggest that both teachers and parents might benefit from training, such as a workshop that would attempt to train inner-city parents how to facilitate students' academic performance. Another workshop might focus on training teachers how to relate to and understand inner-city parents. The researchers feel that only through teacher understanding of the student-parent relationship and parental involvement can the inner-city child begin to experience educational excellence.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE ON IMPROVING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF INNER-CITY STUDENTS

QUESTIONNAIRE ON IMPROVING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF INNER-CITY STUDENTS

The 25 items below assess the attitudes of parents and teachers of inner-city children about the relationships among parents, teachers, and students in inner-city schools and how these relationships can help to improve the academic achievement of the inner-city child. Each item has four (4) responses: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree. To the right of each item, please check (√) the blank that best represents your response to the statement.

		SA	A	D	SD
1.	Most students feel positive about their teachers' high expectations of them.				
2.	Most parents feel that teachers use a variety of communication, oral and written, to convey messages to them.				
3.	Most students get along well together.				
4.	Most parents expect their children to maintain a minimum grade average of C and above in Reading and Math, and in one or more academic subjects, for promotion to another grade level.				
5.	Most teachers believe that only through parental help and involvement can a teacher's job be performed adequately.				
6.	Most students work hard because the teacher expects them to work hard.				
7.	Most parents feel good about a teacher's high expectations and evaluations of their children.				
8.	Most teachers expect all students to master the minimum number of goals and objectives required by the school system.				

		SA	A	D	SD
9.	Most parents expect their children to master both the minimum and above number of goals and objectives required by the school system.				
10.	Most students accept the mastery levels required by the school system and try to reach them.				
11.	Most teachers expect all students to master all required Reading and Math tests at 80% mastery level or above.				
12.	Most parents are satisfied with the teacher's work with their children.				
13.	Most students like and respect their teachers.				
14.	Most teachers have a positive relationship with parents.				
15.	Most parents are able to tell their children what they expect of them in school.				
16.	Most parents expect their children to master all required tests in Reading and Math at 80% mastery.				
17.	Most students feel positive about their teachers' evaluations of them.				
18.	Most parents have a positive relationship with their children.				
19.	Most parents/students welcome home visits to better understand what the teacher expects of them throughout the year.				
20.	Most students react and behave in a manner that demonstrates love and high expectations from their parents.				

		SA	A	D	SD
21.	Most parents care about and love their children.				
22.	Most parents feel that teachers communicate clearly to them.				
23.	Most teachers expect all students to maintain a minimum grade average of a C or above in Reading and Math and in one or more other academic subjects for promotion to another grade level.				
24.	Most parents would like for teachers to use home visits to lay the groundwork for communication that will occur throughout the year.				
25.	Most students feel that the teacher cares for them.				
26.	Most teachers have high expectations for the students in their classes.				

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

1. As a parent, what do you expect your child to do in school each day?___

_____

_____

_____

2. What do you expect teachers to do with your child?_____

_____

_____

_____

3. How do you expect to assist your child during the school year?

_____

_____

_____

4. What do you expect from your child and other students in their classes?

_____

_____

_____

_____